

*October 14, 2009*

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar as follow up to a September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting between federal officials and California Members of Congress to discuss the future of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

The letter calls on the Secretary to actively solicit input from the residents who live in the Delta area and ensure their seat at the table as any federal proposals on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta are considered.

The text of the letter is below:

October 14, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar

Secretary of the Interior

1849 C St., NW

Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Thank you for your attention to California's water challenges and for your efforts to advance meaningful initiatives. As your Department and other federal agencies make key decisions affecting the future of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, I urge you in the strongest terms to actively solicit input from the people who are most dependent on the Delta's health. You should specifically seek the insight of residents of the counties encompassing the Delta, who are currently underrepresented in ongoing negotiations. Water quality and availability for my constituents in Contra Costa County and San Joaquin County – two of the five "Delta Counties" – must be preserved in any plan. I believe we can find comprehensive solutions that enhance water resources throughout California without posing risks to residents of the Delta Counties.

California faces significant water shortages, and some parts of the state are experiencing serious economic difficulties exacerbated by drought conditions. Residents of the Delta Counties are dedicated partners in your efforts to provide relief to the most drought-afflicted portions of the state. As water projects advance, however, the concerns of water users in northern California, and specifically the Delta Counties, must be taken into account. I will not accept harmful proposals that are negotiated without proper consideration of the likely effects on the Delta Counties and that offer little chance of improving California's water system.

As you know, the Delta is the central nexus of California's water distribution network and supplies drinking water for tens of millions of Californians while sustaining vibrant agricultural industries throughout the state. The Delta is more, however, than simply a water resource for southern California – the Delta Counties are home to almost four million people, numerous species of flora and fauna, a strong agricultural tradition that depends on a clean, reliable supply of water and groundwater, and a vital tourism industry. The difficulties facing the estuary are felt most deeply by the residents who live, work, and raise their families in the Delta Counties and whose well-being is dependent upon a clean and reliable water supply.

Too often, proposed solutions to California's water challenges – such as an alternative

conveyance system – are considered without recognition of the likely consequences for families and small businesses in the Delta Counties. For example, farmers in the northern San Joaquin Valley depend on healthy water supplied by the Delta for their livelihoods. A proposed canal that diverts additional fresh water supplies from the Delta would result in substantial saltwater intrusion and a further erosion of water quality – with harmful consequences for the farmers, fishermen, and businesses whose economic well-being is inextricably linked to the Delta’s health. Other people would be similarly affected, and residents of the Delta Counties must have a seat at the table as proposals are evaluated and as decisions affecting their homes, health, and livelihoods are made.

The recently-announced Memorandum of Understanding signed by your Department and several other federal agencies indicates that a coordinated federal work plan will be developed, “in consultation with the State and other interested stakeholders.” I request detailed information as to how your Department plans to engage residents of the five Delta Counties in this process as well as information as to what consultations have already occurred. I also request your Department’s analysis and feedback on proposals brought to your attention by farmers, families, and decision makers of the five Delta Counties – the very people who know the area and its challenges best.

I also encourage you to aggressively advance water projects with broad support. A clear need exists to improve current water infrastructure, invest in innovative water recycling and reuse projects, and improve water efficiency. Any solutions to California’s water challenges must be viable for the Delta – in addition to other stakeholders in the state. Water quality and water quantity in the Delta should be preserved in any proposals. Projects that engender legitimate, widespread opposition, that pose a serious threat to the Delta’s ecological health, or that could harm Delta residents should not move forward. I will not accept proposals that may lay the groundwork for future water shortages in the Delta Counties and surrounding area.

I am confident that we can advance prudent solutions that alleviate drought conditions while also beginning our shared long-term goal of restoring the Delta’s health. I thank you for your attention to this letter, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Jerry McNerney

Member of Congress